

Remarks/Arguments:

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Ryan (U.S. 2002/0010743). It is respectfully submitted, however, that claim 1 is patentable over the art of record for the reasons set forth below.

Ryan discloses a method and apparatus for providing entire worksheets to authorized individuals. As set forth in Ryan at paragraph [0107], line 7:

the spreadsheet distribution program 40 modifies the listing of included worksheets so that it displays only those worksheets designated to be received by the recipient

Thus, recipients are those individuals who have been designated to receive specific worksheets.

Applicants' invention is different than Ryan. Ryan discloses the ability to permit access to entire layers of spreadsheet. By contrast, in Applicants' invention, users of a spreadsheet are given access to a layer of the spreadsheet on a column and/or row basis (for example, although even finer levels of access are covered by Applicants' claims). Page 3, line 21 et seq. of Applicants' specification describes an exemplary embodiment with reference to Fig. 1:

Referring now to Fig. 1, a spreadsheet is provided which summarizes the annual budget of XYZ company. Each of a number of budget areas of the company ... are assigned a column in the spreadsheet ... above each budget area column is an assigned e-mail data cell. By entering an e-mail address of a user into the "assigned e-mail" data cell, the user corresponding to the e-mail address is given access to the data cells in the budget area column.

In certain embodiments of the present invention, a user may only be able to view the portion of the data structure to which the user has been provided access rights to. In such an embodiment, John Brown would only be able to see the data cells in the office space budget area column, Mike Holt would only be able to view the data cells in the office supplies budget area column, etc.

... access rights refers to any of a broad class of data structure access rights, for example, editing access, viewing access, creation access, and any combination thereof.

It is because Applicants are sharing access to a data structure in a common layer, that particular advantages are obtained which are neither disclosed nor suggested by the prior art.

In particular, a section of the spreadsheet layer for one individual can partially overlap the section of the spreadsheet layer for another individual without completely overlapping the second persons section. Refer, for example, to Applicants' Fig. 3. Note how PHart has access to all of the human resources data while JYU has access to only the hourly maintenance subsection of the human resources data. Because Ryan assigns users to spreadsheets on a per layer basis, it would be completely impossible for Ryan to permit partial overlap of authorized sections of the spreadsheet as is achieved by Applicants. Thus, Applicants' claim 1 includes the feature of:

... wherein one of said sections of one of said users is permitted to partially overlap another of said sections of another of said users without completely overlapping said another of said sections.

Similarly, because Applicants are permitting database access to a common layer (at least logically speaking), Applicants are able to achieve the claimed feature of:

... displaying the sections each of the users has access to as a respective common layer of the common spreadsheet.

Thus, Applicants achieve particular synergy which Ryan neither discloses nor suggests. The combination of common layer display and partially overlapping access enables cells within the spreadsheets to be viewed simultaneously, something which Ryan is completely incapable of doing. Thus, the synergy of these two features provides claim limitations which distinguish over Ryan.

From the Official Action, it is questionable whether claim 18 has also been rejected for the same reasons as claim 1. Nevertheless, claim 18 is also patentable over the art of record for reasons similar to those set forth above with regard to claim 1.

Similarly, as claim 12 has not been identified in the rejection statement, the basis of the rejection of claim 12 is not clear. Claim 12, however, is also patentable over the art of record for reasons similar to those set forth above with regard to claim 1.

Claims 8, 10, 11, 17 and 19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ryan in view of Guttman (U.S. 6,988,241). Claim 19, the independent claim is patentable over the art of record for reasons similar to those set forth above with regard to claim 1. Guttman does not make up for the deficiencies of Ryan in rejecting Applicants' claims.

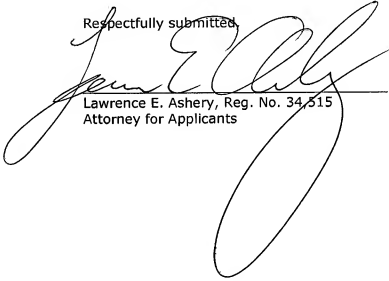
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The remaining dependent claims in this application are all dependent on allowable independent claims and thus allowable on the basis of their dependency on allowable independent claims.

In view of the amendments and arguments set forth above, the above-identified application is in condition for allowance which action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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